

Chaplain reflects on national tragedy

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.)

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Chapel

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt from a message delivered by Chaplain Dennis K. Kitterman at the Candlelight Remembrance Vigil, Sept. 14.

On Sept. 11, the world was changed. Thousands of innocent people were killed in a senseless act of terrorism. Nothing in our history compares.

As we view the events of the past few days, the images we watched on TV will be forever etched in our minds. From those images, emerge a number of feelings: anger, frustration, anxiety, fear, confusion and even revenge. And many of us are asking...what next?

Most of these feelings and thoughts are normal, but as a civilized nation in an uncivilized world, we must focus on what is an appropriate response.

Our gathering today is noteworthy. This evening we light a candle to lift up and re-

member those who lost their lives in this terrorist attack: the men and women in the Pentagon, on the planes, in the buildings and those who were rushing to offer aid.

In the midst of these people there were children, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters and, of course, military members. There were innocent victims and there were heroes. There were Americans, British, Germans and Australians. In all, more than 26 nations lost people.

To each of these nations we light this candle. We honor and remember the dead.

As the death toll mounts, so too does our anger. The evidence of evil in the world is staggering, but this manifestation of massive death and destruction is beyond comprehension. And yet, in the midst of this, we must remain calm and allow for justice to take place. It is imperative that we do so.

We must be careful not to stereotype our enemies. Countless acts of violence have already occurred against innocent people.

We must find effective and appropriate responses to this terror. Our prayers must contribute towards a peaceful world, not toward escalating violence.

Finally, it is appropriate that we seek to forgive those who committed these horrendous acts, and allow for God's ultimate justice to prevail. This is by far the most difficult thing we must strive to do. If we don't trust in God for justice, our anger, hatred and bitterness will destroy us, and the terrorists will have won. We must not let them win.

As tomorrow dawns, we know our government may call upon us to defend our country from our enemies and to protect our freedoms. Bravely we will respond, trusting in our God, that righteousness will prevail. And as we respond, we will remember those who died. We will remember the price they paid, and the price of freedom. We will remember that we are America, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.